

THE BEIRA PATROL

Britain's Broken Blockade against Rhodesia

Richard Mobley

Between 1966 and 1975, the Royal Navy, primarily, conducted one of the more unusual blockades of modern history—a maritime-intercept operation that became known as the “Beira patrol.” The Royal Navy and Air Force monitored shipping in the Mozambique Channel in an attempt to ensure that no oil reached landlocked Southern Rhodesia (today Zimbabwe) via the port of Beira, in the Portuguese colony of Mozambique. Although the military executed these operations skillfully, Britain’s overall oil embargo against Rhodesia, which had unilaterally declared its independence in 1965, failed. Well aware of oil “seepage” to Rhodesia, London did not (and could not) extend maritime interception operations to other ports in Mozambique or elsewhere. On the other hand, it refused to abandon a mission that was, because of substantial and growing resource constraints, increasingly unpopular within the Navy. The Beira patrol

had become too visible a component of London’s commitment to the maintenance of United Nations sanctions against its rebellious colony. Whitehall (that is, the British government) would relieve the Ministry of Defence of this mission only when Mozambique gained independence from Portugal in 1975 and could credibly assure the UN that no oil would cross its territory to Rhodesia.

Today, in the light of dozens of recently declassified British documents, the Beira patrol is a cautionary tale for states that must decide upon, and commanders who must then orchestrate, maritime interception operations. It illustrates the challenges of shaping an

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The views expressed in this article (and all Review articles) are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. government.

Report Documentation Page			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188		
Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.					
1. REPORT DATE 2002	2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED 00-00-2002 to 00-00-2002		
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE The Beira Patrol: Britain's Broken Blockade against Rhodesia			5a. CONTRACT NUMBER		
			5b. GRANT NUMBER		
			5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER		
6. AUTHOR(S)			5d. PROJECT NUMBER		
			5e. TASK NUMBER		
			5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER		
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval War College, 686 Cushing Road, Newport, RI, 02841-1207			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER		
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)			10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)		
			11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)		
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Same as Report (SAR)	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 22	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

appropriate force for maritime sanctions and shows vividly how demanding even a small blockade can be, especially if prolonged. It reveals the difficulties of fashioning credible rules of engagement and the complexities of the interplay between rules and force posture. It also exemplifies the legal, resource, and political obstacles to modifying a blockade once it has started.

Most important, Britain's experience in the Beira patrol demonstrates that the symbolic utility of naval forces can be compelling in unforeseen and unwelcome ways. Implementing a naval blockade with carriers, frigates, and land-based aviation, Britain established a dramatic and public commitment to sanction enforcement. But the use of such highly visible forces (ultimately mandated by an unusual, British-crafted UN Security Council resolution) had a downside—Whitehall found it awkward to cease or reduce maritime interception operations when it might have wished to do so. Diplomatic objectives consistently outweighed Ministry of Defence protests that the patrol had become of questionable utility and that demands upon naval resources were disproportionate. Because warships off Beira were such powerful symbols, the Royal Navy found itself in an open-ended campaign. A prisoner of its own Security Council resolution, the United Kingdom could not end its maritime sanction enforcement—however ineffectual—as long as it remained committed in principle to sanctions against Rhodesia.

THE “UNILATERAL DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE”

The Beira patrol originated from a dispute between the United Kingdom and its increasingly rebellious colony, Rhodesia. In 1964, the two northern portions of the colonial Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland achieved independence as black majority-controlled states—Malawi (once Nyasaland) in July and Zambia (the former Northern Rhodesia) in October. London anticipated that the whites of Southern Rhodesia, who controlled the colony although they constituted a small minority of its population, would attempt to preempt the domestic and international pressure for black-majority rule by establishing Southern Rhodesia as a white-controlled state. Prime Minister Harold Wilson of Britain outlined in October 1964 his government's preconditions for granting the colony independence: a guarantee of unimpeded progress toward majority rule; guarantees against unconstitutional amendment of the 1961 constitution (a document that had implied movement toward majority rule); an immediate token of improvement of the political status of Africans; progress toward cessation of racial discrimination; and agreement on a settlement acceptable to the entire population, using a general referendum or similar device.¹

Instead, on 11 November 1965, Salisbury (later Harare, the capital of Southern Rhodesia), issued a “Unilateral Declaration of Independence,” asserting the

existence of the sovereign state of Rhodesia, under Prime Minister Ian Smith. The Security Council retaliated on 20 November with a regime of voluntary sanctions.² UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 217 called on all members of the United Nations to withhold recognition of Rhodesia, refuse assistance to its government, sever economic relations with Salisbury, and embargo petroleum shipments to the rebellious colony.³ This resolution was to serve as the original (if flimsy) legal justification for later British maritime intercept operations, giving the United Kingdom reason to expect the cooperation of the flag states of suspect tankers.⁴ In December, London banned selected imports from Rhodesia and prohibited the export of British oil to it.⁵

Unwilling to invade its colony, Britain publicly forswore outright military intervention, thus eliminating a potential tool for coercion. Indeed, Wilson at first ruled out (in a statement of 21 December 1965 to the House of Commons) even a blockade of products going to Rhodesia. Believing that a potential oil boycott by certain Middle East producers and cessation of oil exports by government-controlled British companies would be sufficient, the prime minister did not then intend to submit an oil-blockade resolution to the United Nations.⁶ Instead, the Foreign Office and the Commonwealth Relations Office sought to formulate a strategy of limited sanctions to erode Smith's domestic white, middle-class support. London would ultimately declare a series of unilateral sanctions and also support several UN sanctions that gradually increased pressure upon Salisbury.

Unfortunately, London had other, conflicting objectives as well, especially a desire to lure Rhodesia back into the colonial fold. Whitehall therefore sought to treat its problems with Rhodesia as a conflict between *metropole* and colony. Even when urging UN involvement in the dispute, London would discourage multilateral military action against Rhodesia or any extension of sanctions to Rhodesia's backers in white-ruled South Africa and Mozambique. However, a major bloc in the UN, comprising especially the newly independent African and Asian states, wanted military measures taken directly against Rhodesia, along with expanded sanctions. Britain attempted to blunt such initiatives; a regime of economic sanctions, particularly maritime, would become Britain's way of containing the international repercussions while pressuring its colony. This overarching desire to limit the dispute would later lead Wilson's cabinet to reject the Defence Ministry's own plans to extend the blockade.

“ACTIVE AND URGENT STEPS”

Even before the naval blockade was started in March 1966, the British bureaucracy sent mixed signals about the utility of sanctions against Rhodesia. In October 1965, the Joint Intelligence Committee (the United Kingdom's highest

estimative body) advised the political leadership that even a full trade embargo would “not in itself [have] crippling effects on the Rhodesia economy.” However, the committee also suggested that prolonged and severe economic pressure “might in time induce the white electorate to throw out the rebel government.”⁷

Prime Minister Wilson, for his part, had high hopes that these sanctions would work. On 7 January 1966, he told the Jamaican prime minister that sanctions were “beginning to bite.” He estimated that in three months the rebels would at least rescind the unilateral declaration of independence and reconsider their stance on minority rule.⁸ He made an even bolder prediction in a convocation of Commonwealth foreign ministers on 10 January 1966—that the cumulative effects of economic and financial sanctions might well bring the rebellion to an end “within a matter of weeks rather than months.”⁹ Wilson based this prediction on several factors: feedback he was seeing in the Rhodesian press, a presumption that South Africa and Mozambique would honor the British sanctions in order not to escalate the crisis, and optimism that Zambia would agree to freeze the movement of goods across its territory to and from Rhodesia.¹⁰

As Wilson made these optimistic statements, nevertheless, the Foreign Office was beginning to look at the possibility of a maritime embargo. On 7 January, as an aside to a statement that Britain had no formal contingency plan for a blockade, it observed that the carrier HMS *Eagle* and two frigates were near Mombasa, Kenya, and could be available for such a task within days.¹¹

This early planning proved prudent. The government’s grounds for optimism were dashed during the first week of February, when British press reports of tanker-truck shipments of oil from South Africa to Rhodesia raised serious questions about South African neutrality and the possible effectiveness of oil sanctions. Rhodesia had in the past received oil through three primary routes: by road, across the Beit Bridge from South Africa; by rail, through Mozambique from either South Africa or the port of Lourenço Marques (now Maputo); and by pipeline, carrying crude oil from Beira to the Rhodesian refinery in Umtali.¹²

The prime minister became increasingly frustrated over the oil “seepage” into Rhodesia by land. On 16 February Wilson directed his personal secretary to issue a warning to key cabinet departments: “The Prime Minister is very concerned about reports in the press which indicate that the oil embargo in Rhodesia is being circumvented with increasing effectiveness. . . . [T]here is clearly very serious leaking in the oil sanction machinery. . . . [T]he Prime Minister’s view is that the oil leakage into Rhodesia is serious, must be taken seriously and he hopes that the Departments concerned will take active and urgent steps to have it stopped.”¹³

Two days later, the foreign secretary, Michael Stewart, warned Wilson that the black African states might push for more “urgent” sanctions in view of the

continuing oil flow into Rhodesia. Indeed, they might raise the issue at the UN at any time.¹⁴ Against this backdrop, the Chiefs of Staff Committee, Britain's senior purely military decision-making body, opined on 24 February that "pirate" tankers could arrive in Beira "un-noticed." In response to a request from an interagency Rhodesia contingency steering committee, the committee directed that a maritime surveillance plan be prepared for submission to the prime minister. This would be no mere planning exercise; the likely operational commander would prepare the plan, which would involve both surface and air components. Headquartered in Aden, Middle East Command would control the operation until relieved of this responsibility by Far East Command in May 1967. The committee had in mind Majunga (now Mahajanga), in the Malagasy Republic (as Madagascar called itself from its independence in 1960 through 1975), as a staging base for Shackleton maritime patrol aircraft.¹⁵

In other words, oil smuggling had become the issue of the day, and the naval blockade planning effort was about to get a big push. Later in February 1966 the Rhodesian crisis as a whole developed a maritime flavor when the British government (and the world press) started to focus on tankers carrying oil for Rhodesia. The Rhodesians themselves had set the stage. On 25 February, the Rhodesian minister of commerce and industry had announced that a tanker would arrive at Beira with oil for Rhodesia "in the foreseeable future."¹⁶ Some days later he predicted, "The day our first tanker arrives in Beira we shall have won this economic war."¹⁷ London had already received numerous reports of tankers. Between 7 January and 1 March, Whitehall, working with a host of commercial and intelligence sources, had investigated thirty-two reports and found them to be "phantom tankers"—nonexistent or innocent.¹⁸

This mixture of Rhodesian public relations "spin," rumor, solid intelligence, and unwanted publicity forced Britain to "do something" to prove its commitment to sanctions; on 1 March, accordingly, it established the Beira patrol. The Royal Navy stationed the *Rothesay*-class antisubmarine frigate HMS *Lowestoft* off Beira and directed it to prepare for intercept operations, to start on 4 March. Gannet Mark 3 airborne early warning aircraft flying from the carrier HMS *Ark Royal* (which had been diverted from a transit to the Far East) joined the search in the Mozambique Channel on 6 March.¹⁹

The need for the patrol was immediately confirmed—the government soon received evidence that two tankers might be making for Beira with crude oil for Rhodesia. The *Joanna V*, a Greek-flag vessel, had been making an unusual voyage; after steaming from the Arabian Gulf to Rotterdam via the Suez Canal, it had entered the Atlantic as if to return the long way, around Africa. Its Greek owner, it developed, had contracted with a South African shipping agent to deliver a total of twenty-seven cargoes—about a year's supply for Rhodesia—to an

unspecified customer. A second tanker, the *Manuela*, was also reported en route to Mozambique across the Indian Ocean from Bandar Mashur, Iran.²⁰

Meanwhile, the Chiefs of Staff Committee was refining its arrangements and prospects for success. On 8 March, in light of evidence it had received of construction in progress of six oil tanks in Beira, the committee concluded that oil had (as the Rhodesian commerce minister had already asserted) become emblematic—if oil reached Beira, sanctions of all kinds would appear to be failing. The committee assessed, though, that Rhodesia already had sufficient oil stocks to maintain morale even if Britain could impose an effective embargo.²¹

In a message on 10 March to the prime minister of New Zealand, Keith J. Holyoake, Wilson elaborated on the criticality of the oil embargo, despite the apparent policy turnabout it represented:

I am worried at the possibility of a dramatic breach in the oil embargo such as would result from a tanker entering Beira with a cargo for Rhodesia. . . . [I]f a tanker were to arrive we should face increasing pressure from African states for a Chapter VII [of the UN Charter] resolution [i.e., authorizing the use of armed force] in the UN. It remains our view that we should try and avoid this. If we once admit that Rhodesia is a threat to peace, there is no knowing where we may find ourselves. . . . Nevertheless, we recognize that the pressure for a Chapter VII resolution would probably be irresistible and our aim would have to be to channel it in a direction of an embargo solely directed to oil supplies for Rhodesia.²²

The Commonwealth Relations Office elaborated on this objective in a message sent to British embassies worldwide in early April:

Our immediate and urgent purpose is to obtain authority to prevent the arrival at Beira by vessels reasonably believed to be carrying oil to Rhodesia. . . . You should, therefore, emphasize importance of our decision which reflects determination of British government to end rebellion in Rhodesia as soon as possible. There will no doubt be pressure to extend the resolution, e.g., to cover South Africa in relation to the oil embargo, and possibly to extend other economic sanctions generally. . . . We have already approached the South African government with the object of persuading them to modify their policy vis-à-vis Rhodesia and so avoid a confrontation between themselves and the United Nations. If this approach is to have any prospect of success we must avoid reference to South Africa's position in the Security Council.²³

SURVEILLANCE, INTERCEPTION, AND DETERRENCE

The initial British commitment of naval forces soon comprised a carrier, two frigates—*Lowestoft* and HMS *Rhyl*—and a logistical support ship. If the carrier had to depart station, the Royal Navy would deploy a third frigate. Either *Ark Royal* or *Eagle* would have patrol responsibilities until 25 May 1966, when Britain eliminated the requirement for a carrier. For the remaining nine years of the

blockade, a succession of Royal Navy “small boys”—two destroyers or frigates at any one time (until the last months of the operation)—carried the burden of the surface blockade.

The warships, operating twenty to forty miles off Beira, were to intercept suspect tankers that had been detected by shore-based maritime patrol aircraft, upon which they would rely, once the involvement of carriers ended, for surveillance, alerting, and vectoring.²⁴ Difficulties in securing basing rights, however,

delayed the participation of maritime patrol aircraft; France rebuffed Britain’s request to use Majunga. The British Middle East Command accordingly prepared to launch patrol aircraft to the Mozambique Channel all the way from Mombasa, Kenya.

Meanwhile, during the blockade’s first two weeks, *Ark Royal*, *Lowestoft*, and *Rhyl* steamed in the Mozambique Channel. *Ark Royal*’s Gannets searched out to 350 miles from Beira. When they gained radar contact, the carrier sent Buccaneer strike aircraft or Sea Vixen fighters to investigate. In this way, tankers were typically detected fifteen hours before they could reach Beira. As discussed below, in the early weeks of the operation London was required in that time to approach the tankers’ flag countries and arrange to stop and board

the ships, if necessary; with the passage in April of Security Council Resolution 221, Britain would no longer have to secure this approval, and early airborne detection would become less critical.²⁵

On 16 March the French relented, and by 19 March a detachment of three Shackletons was flying daily single-aircraft patrols from Majunga, at first complementing the carrier-based patrols and then replacing them.²⁶ Although in 1969 the Royal Air Force was to reduce the Shackleton detachment from three to two aircraft, the Navy would enjoy dedicated maritime air support until 1971.²⁷

At first, each Shackleton flew daily twelve-hour missions, normally from 6 A.M. to 6 P.M. local time; in June 1966, the patrols dropped to three a week. The bombers would fly at maximum speed along the shipping lanes to the northern end of the Mozambique Channel and then south to a point fifty miles south of Beira. Radar was their primary sensor; it covered a swath between forty and sixty nautical miles on each side of track. When the Shackletons acquired contacts, they would fly over them to investigate.²⁸ The aircraft were required to report the

EAST AFRICA, 1966–75



location, course, speed, and identity of all tankers, bulk carriers, and warships sighted to the officer in tactical command—the senior Royal Navy warship commanding officer present. (The officer in tactical command might order a surface unit to investigate, but only the Ministry of Defence could authorize it to stop or divert a suspect tanker.) The aircraft were also to notify that commander should they sight any previously designated “suspect tanker,” any tanker not on the weekly “innocent list,” or any tanker on the list that was apparently steaming for Beira after having declared for another port. In such a case the officer in tactical command would send a “flash” (highest-precedence) report to the Ministry of Defence.²⁹

The Defence Ministry prepared a comprehensive press release to be issued in April 1966. It noted that aircraft from *Ark Royal* and *Eagle* had flown by then nearly a thousand surveillance sorties. Four different frigates and destroyers, as well as seven auxiliaries, had supported the operation. Three Shackletons had been involved, each initially flying four hundred patrol hours a month.³⁰ Although the sortie rate soon dropped to only three missions a week, the Shackletons still flew 220 operational sorties between March 1966 and April 1967.³¹ During the same period, the two carriers and seventeen other combatants, in addition to Royal Fleet Auxiliaries (resupply vessels), had participated in the patrol at one time or another.

The Middle East Command characterized the period starting in mid-June 1966 as the patrol’s “deterrent phase.” The military now hoped to deter future attempts at oil-sanction “busting” by means of highly conspicuous surveillance over the Mozambique Channel. “It would soon become common knowledge throughout the merchant fleets that it was impossible to get through the Mozambique Channel without being investigated by a Shackleton. They would warn the frigates off Beira who would intercept and arrest with the probable loss of an expensive cargo. The game was not worth it.”³²

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

At least four sets of rules of engagement—issued by Flag Officer Middle East on the basis of guidelines supplied by the Ministry of Defence—governed the Beira patrol between 1966 and 1968. The successive changes were significant because they reflected the evolution of British understanding of the legal basis of the operation. With one early exception, the rules became successively tougher; eventually, following an embarrassing incident in 1967 involving the French tanker *Artois*, London would authorize, if all else failed, gunfire directly at a tanker’s bridge.

The first set of rules, issued on 15 February, delineated the responsibilities of the blockading ships. Flag Officer Middle East instructed his frigates that if ordered

to intercept a tanker bound for Beira, they were to direct it to another port. If the vessel did not comply, the commanding officer was to take a series of escalatory steps, including firing shots across the bow and training guns directly at the ship. A boarding party might then be sent to order the master to divert; if he refused, the party was to “take over ship with minimum force” and steam it out of the area.³³ To preclude untoward incidents, however, Flag Officer Middle East also warned that none of these actions would occur before the United Kingdom had secured permission from the tanker’s flag state. The patroller’s only initial action would be to interrogate and shadow the tanker until Britain secured this approval.

Reviewing this plan, Prime Minister Wilson became concerned with ensuring that the Royal Navy would scrupulously respect the limits of British authority under international law, particularly in light of the voluntary nature of Security Council Resolution 217. Speaking through his personal secretary on 11 March, Wilson warned that “before any action to intercept is taken the consent of the flag state should have been obtained.” He also desired that commanding officers be given a “clear understanding that any force used must be kept to a minimum.”³⁴

Defence Ministry guidance to Flag Officer Middle East had assumed that a tanker’s flag state had given Britain permission to divert the ship. A week after the prime minister expressed his concerns, the Defence Ministry modified its guidelines; now, if a tanker refused to turn away when challenged, a boarding party would warn the master, in the name of the vessel’s flag state, to change course. If that did not work, a shot across the bow was authorized. Gone was any option of commandeering the ship. Indeed, if a tanker absolutely refused to comply, the warship could only escort it, and then only to the Mozambican six-mile territorial limit. In other words, the tanker could proceed to Beira unhindered.³⁵

These modified rules of engagement tightened up considerably when the UN Security Council passed Resolution 221 on 9 April 1966. The unusual voyage of the *Joanna V*, which had drawn British attention in early March, had ended on 5 April in a highly embarrassing way—the Greek-flag tanker had entered Beira after all, unmolested, under escort by the frustrated HMS *Plymouth*, and with wide publicity. The day before, still at sea, the frigate had attempted to persuade *Joanna V* to go to another port; Greece having refused permission to divert it, *Plymouth* could not use force.³⁶ Consequently, it was the Royal Navy that was deterred, before the watchful eyes of the world press.

Whitehall’s legal advisors still warned that Britain would be liable if it attempted to force a diversion without permission of the flag state. They added on 7 April that use of force must be in accordance with an appropriate Chapter VII resolution. That same day, the Commonwealth Relations Office sent a flash-precedence message to British embassies that Britain would seek an

emergency meeting of the Security Council to obtain UN authority to use force to stop vessels carrying oil to Beira.³⁷

Over the next several days the United Kingdom lobbied furiously in the Security Council for a new resolution that would give a stronger legal basis for its embargo. It argued that continued seaborne deliveries of oil were a threat to peace, because if sanctions failed, violence might erupt in southern Africa. Britain argued that under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, preventing their failure might justify the use of force. (The United Nations had used the provision only once before, at the beginning of the Korean War.)³⁸

The British drew up such a resolution, crafting it to limit the risk of escalation. It confined the blockade to Beira only and specifically authorized only the United Kingdom to employ force. For reasons that will be discussed below, the Defence Ministry was leery of allowing other navies to participate. In the event, the new resolution, passed as UNSCR 221, was to have the unintended and costly effect of forcing the Royal Navy (aside from assistance for several years from the Royal Air Force) to maintain the nine-year blockade entirely alone.

The resolution called upon Portugal “not to permit oil to be pumped through the pipeline from Beira to Rhodesia” and “not to receive at Beira oil destined for Rhodesia.” All states were to ensure the diversion of “any of their vessels reasonably believed to be carrying oil destined for Rhodesia which may be en route for Beira.”³⁹ The teeth of the resolution, however, were in paragraph 5, which “[called] upon the Government of the United Kingdom to prevent by the use of force if necessary the arrival at Beira of vessels reasonably believed to be carrying oil destined for Rhodesia, and empower[ed] the United Kingdom to arrest and detain the tanker known as the *Joanna V* upon her departure from Beira in the event her oil cargo [was] discharged there.”⁴⁰

With this resolution, the Defence Ministry liberalized, from the blockading force’s viewpoint, the rules of engagement but continued to limit the use of force to “the very minimum.” Ministry approval would still be required for diversion of vessels, and the Royal Navy had to remain outside Mozambique’s territorial waters. The Middle East Command acknowledged that the “resolution radically altered the whole concept of our operations. With a tight ring of frigates around Beira having authority to stop any suspected runners, the early warning to give maximum time for diplomatic action was no longer essential.”⁴¹

The Royal Navy felt, however, that Mozambique’s six-mile limit was problematic. Soon after the Security Council issued its new resolution, the Defence Ministry advised Prime Minister Wilson that it was possible for a tanker to transit to Beira from Durban, South Africa, entirely within South African, and then Mozambican, territorial waters; without authority to enter those waters, the Navy would be unable to act. Fortunately, no “pirate tanker” ever tried to challenge

the Beira blockade in this way. Had one taken advantage of the territorial limits of an unsympathetic power, the British blockade force would have been hard pressed to stop it without creating an international incident.⁴²

The new system stood until late the following year, when the French forced the Royal Navy to reconsider what constituted “minimum force.” On 19 December 1967, HMS *Minerva* challenged the French-flag tanker *Artois* as it made for Beira. *Artois* was not on the “innocent list,” so *Minerva* requested the ministry to clarify its status. Meanwhile, the tanker continued to approach Beira. *Minerva* signaled “Stop or I will open fire”; *Artois* refused. By the time London finally notified the frigate that *Artois* could legitimately enter Beira, “because it was not carrying oil destined for Rhodesia,” *Minerva* had already fired warning shots; the tanker had ignored them and entered Mozambican territorial waters.⁴³

Fearing that a smuggler might emulate *Artois*, the minister of defence, Denis Healey, castigated the existing rules of engagement for “lack of precision”: “Not only does it place an unfair burden on commanding officers to leave them in any doubt about how far they are expected to go in the enforcement of their requests, but it exposes the Royal Navy to the risk of international discredit should an illegal tanker disregard the threat of force and be allowed to get away with it.” He presented the cabinet with two options: restricting the Beira patrol simply to identifying smugglers, or directing commanding officers to use disabling gunfire against tankers that failed to heed other warnings.⁴⁴

The attorney general reviewed the proposal and gave as his opinion that the Navy had to satisfy two criteria to remain within the bounds of UNSCR 221. The force used had to be “necessary,” and the United Kingdom had to have a “reasonable belief” that the tanker was carrying oil consigned to Rhodesia. The attorney general also opined that UN responsibility was political only—“Any legal responsibility would almost certainly fall on ourselves.”⁴⁵

The foreign secretary, George Thomson, replied that Britain could reasonably meet both criteria. Though the Ministry of Power (the source of much of the Royal Navy’s tanker-movement intelligence) had expressed “some anxiety” about its ability to meet the second standard absolutely, the foreign secretary concluded that it had taken “every possible precaution” to do so. Consequently, he concurred with stiffening the rules of engagement and issuing a stern warning to the United Nations about what might happen to blockade runners.⁴⁶

On 21 March 1968, the Defence Ministry informed the Commander in Chief Far East (who, in Singapore, had assumed responsibilities as operational commander of the Beira patrol from his counterpart in Middle East Command in 1967) that the rules of engagement were being “clarified” and that UN member states were being notified that blockading ships would “enforce their requests to stop, if necessary by opening fire on the vessel.” The ministry directed

the commander to issue new instructions immediately—if naval headquarters at the Defence Ministry ordered that a tanker be diverted, the intercepting warship was to challenge it. If the tanker did not stop, the frigate or destroyer was to take a series of escalating measures: firing across the bow with small-arms tracers, 20 or 40 mm shells, or a 4.5-inch (for a few ships, four-inch) round; then, approaching to point-blank range and warning that it would open fire; and finally, firing surface-practice (that is, not high-explosive) ammunition at the ship's funnel. If these successive measures did not stop the tanker, the frigate was to fire a series of antisubmarine "mortar bombs set shallow about one cable [some two hundred yards] astern of the ship." Finally, if all that failed, the unit was to "open fire with 4.5/4" service ammunition at either the bridge or the engine room or both and continue until the ship does stop."⁴⁷

The British delegation to the United Nations issued a warning to the member states: "[Her Majesty's] ships have been instructed that if their requests to stop are not complied with they may enforce them, if necessary, by opening fire on the vessel. The master of such a vessel would thus, by refusing to stop, put at risk the lives of his crew and the safety of ship and cargo. . . . [A]ll member states will take the necessary action to ensure that the masters of vessels subject to their jurisdiction are made aware of the terms of Security Council Resolution No. 221. . . . [Her Majesty's government] would also urge member states to ensure that operating companies subject to their jurisdiction give advance notification to any [British] diplomatic or consular missions of a proposed call on Beira by an oil tanker."⁴⁸

The new rules of engagement were apparently sufficient. After the *Artois* incident there were no more attempts to disregard the Royal Navy blockade of Beira and no further major revisions to the rules of engagement.

FASHIONING A MORE EFFECTIVE BLOCKADE

The government and the vocal Conservative opposition were well aware that the blockade was porous. In September 1966, the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs reported a "leakage" of 220,000 gallons of oil daily to Rhodesia; under strict rationing, the self-declared nation required only two hundred thousand.⁴⁹ Considerable staff work was therefore devoted to making the blockade tighter or to finding ways to share the burden with other navies. All such initiatives failed, for a variety of reasons. Some exceeded resources; for instance, blockading both Mozambican ports capable of transshipping large quantities of oil (Beira by pipeline, Maputo by rail) would be too demanding for the Royal Navy. Others required confronting South Africa, a Commonwealth member, directly, or risking an expanded debate in the UN—neither of which London was willing to do.

As early as 1966, the Navy had calculated what forces would be needed to extend the blockade. To blockade all ports in Mozambique and South Africa would require seven carriers and thirty escorts, which meant, allowing for rotation of ships on and off station, at least sixty frigates.⁵⁰ The Defence Ministry, for its part, doubted that the entire UN could mount such an ambitious effort, U.S. Navy assistance being unavailable due to the war in Vietnam.⁵¹ Even had the forces been available, the United Kingdom lacked the political will for such a grandiose operation. A member of the Foreign Office advised in January 1967, “I must repeat what we have said in the past, namely that we think it is at present outside of the bounds of political reality to envisage the need for such large scale naval enforcement.”⁵²

To blockade even only the two major Mozambican ports (Beira and Lourenço Marques) would mean keeping six or seven frigates on station, for a total of between fourteen and seventeen if selected export sanctions were to be enforced as well. A pessimistic ministry staff study warned the minister of defence that such a force “would amount to the greater part of the total overseas frigate strength of the Royal Navy and would go far to denude the Mediterranean, Middle East and Far East stations.”⁵³ The Royal Navy could stop oil going into the two major ports, but the blockade would “not really bite since oil could still reach Rhodesia via South Africa.”

Nevertheless, the United Kingdom continued to toy with the idea of an expanded blockade. In March 1968, an internal Defence Ministry document noted that whereas Rhodesia was still getting “all or more oil than it needs,” and whereas Security Council Resolution 221 was still binding on Britain, the ministry was searching for ways to make the blockade more effective.⁵⁴ The matter was taken up also by the Defence and Oversea Policy Committee, which was chaired by the prime minister personally. The DOPC’s conclusions about expanding the blockade to both major Mozambican ports were pessimistic; such an effort, which would cost 1.5 million pounds monthly and tie up fifteen frigates and four or five auxiliaries, would oblige the Royal Navy to abandon most of its other worldwide commitments.⁵⁵ In other words, despite early optimism, a comprehensive naval blockade against even Mozambique alone would be beyond the Royal Navy’s capabilities.

A second approach considered was to request a commitment from Portugal to guarantee that no oil would reach Rhodesia via the territory of Mozambique, its colony. Lisbon had consistently challenged the legality (and binding nature) of Security Council Resolution 221, and the United Kingdom saw little hope of Portuguese cooperation. Nevertheless, the Foreign Office laid out a proposal in which the Beira patrol would be suspended in return for such a commitment. In March 1968, Whitehall again predicted that Portugal would not acquiesce in

such a scheme unless the South Africans were willing to refrain from making good Rhodesian shortfalls caused by loss of the Mozambique connection. It seemed certain that the white-minority government of South Africa would not cooperate; hence, the Defence Ministry concluded, “We cannot therefore count on the acquiescence of the Portuguese.”⁵⁶

The Foreign Office visited this scenario yet again in December 1969. This time, the concept was to co-opt the Mozambique railways and pipeline company—in return for financial compensation, they would agree not to tranship oil to Rhodesia. To make the proposal attractive to the United Nations, however, the foreign ministry sought and received prior agreement from the Royal Navy to reimpose the blockade quickly should such an arrangement break down.⁵⁷ However, London proved unable to obtain the necessary agreement of Portugal or commitments from the other parties that would have been involved.⁵⁸

In addition, the idea of naval burden sharing arose several times during the course of the blockade. There were inherent complications. UNSCR 221 authorized only the United Kingdom to use military force to enforce the blockade; other nations that might wish to participate would need to seek similar legal protection for their navies. That would reopen the UN debate about sanctions enforcement and, because of the widespread hostility in the General Assembly to the white Rhodesian regime, would risk widening the sanctions in ways Britain wished to avoid.⁵⁹ In any case, the Defence Ministry was ambivalent: “We certainly would not want to get involved with help from embarrassing sources, e.g. [the] USSR, from whom it might be difficult to refuse any offers.”⁶⁰ The ministry saw no prospect that the UN would allow Britain to select its partners. It also foresaw additional costs; Britain, it presumed, would be required to provide logistical support to units of foreign navies. In any case, the ministry was skeptical that even “Old Commonwealth” navies could be persuaded to participate.⁶¹

Nevertheless, in June 1969 Prime Minister Wilson decided that the government should consider inviting other countries (such as Canada) to participate in the patrol.⁶² The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (or FCO, as the previously separate bodies were now jointly known) was “not entirely pessimistic” that the Royal Navy might be able to secure naval assistance. The Defence Ministry did not share this view. In November 1969, the FCO ruled out U.S. participation, given its “full scale re-examinations of their policy in southern Africa—and of their overseas commitments generally.” Sweden and Norway had the capability to support the embargo and might be willing to do so, but the Foreign and Commonwealth Office felt that Western European Union countries should be approached first.⁶³ However, the FCO soon cooled even to that possibility:

The potential savings to our resources accruing from foreign participation in the patrol between now and the completion of our withdrawal from the Far East at the end of 1971 is not sufficient to outweigh disadvantages and to justify the substantial risk inherent in such an initiative of embarrassment at the UN and of a rebuff from the governments we approach. Financially, there would be a modest savings in foreign exchange. Operationally, the weight of argument is against it; there might also be increased difficulties of disengagement.⁶⁴

Nonetheless, the FCO left open the option of approaching foreign navies as Royal Navy force reductions made it increasingly difficult to maintain the blockade. The cabinet secretary echoed this prospect to Wilson in March 1970.⁶⁵ None of these approaches was fruitful.

“GETTING SHOT OF THE COMMITMENT”

However professionally the Royal Navy and Air Force conducted the blockade, this inevitably ineffectual operation, conducted so far away from home, became increasingly unpopular within the Defence Ministry. Indeed, many of the burden-sharing initiatives discussed above were outgrowths of an underlying desire to eliminate the commitment entirely. The ministry raised persuasive arguments about the costs of the patrol for a nation that had decided to end its commitments east of Suez. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office, however, fought to maintain the patrol because of its political visibility; the prime minister was to endorse that position. As long as Britain attempted to reverse Southern Rhodesia's unilateral declaration of independence, it would be committed to sanctions; as long as it was committed to sanctions, it was tied to UNSCR 221 and the Beira patrol.

Queried by the Commonwealth Office in February 1968 as to the costs of the patrol, the Defence Ministry eagerly responded: “We are very willing to play our part in an exercise [exchange of correspondence] which will give ministers a broad indication of the savings to be had from stopping the Beira patrol. From the Navy's point of view the patrol reduces ship availability and it is not a task from which we derive any great training value.”⁶⁶ The ministry argued that maintaining the patrol, particularly after 1971, would “greatly reduce” the nation's ability to respond to contingencies outside of Europe.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, in March 1968 the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee concluded that the time “was not ripe” to end the patrol, although from the purely military view “one should be glad to get rid of the tasks.”⁶⁸ The DOPC concluded that the political disadvantages of ending the patrol outweighed any financial gains or operational relief to be expected from its cessation.⁶⁹ However, the committee agreed to reconsider cessation of the patrol “if the balance of advantages changed.”⁷⁰

In November the Defence Ministry tried again, asking the Foreign and Commonwealth Office whether the Beira patrol could be ended unilaterally. The reply was that the patrol would have to remain in effect until such time as Parliament should grant Rhodesia independence.⁷¹ (In the event, Parliament did not accede to a settlement of the Rhodesian/Zimbabwean issue, which was to become wide-reaching and infinitely complex, until 1979.)

In May 1969, the Ministry of Defence again raised the cost issue and the risk of “overstretching” the Navy’s frigate force. In a draft memo, the minister pointed out that a total of six frigates was being required to maintain two on patrol. He cited the low training value of the patrol, operational flexibility penalties, the longer frigate deployments involved, the necessity of permanently deploying fleet maintenance assets and, for all these reasons, a resulting lowered standard of operational readiness. “There would be clear advantages in terms of ship availability and operational flexibility if the patrol could be given up as soon as possible. The operational penalties imposed by the task will be substantially greater if it is necessary to continue the patrol after the withdrawal of our forces from east of Suez.”⁷² The minister’s staff continued this refrain the next month: “There is no training value in the patrol[,] for the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force aircraft cannot combine it with their antisubmarine role. Because oil products are patently reaching Rhodesia through other routes[,] the men employed on the patrol cannot be expected to derive any satisfaction from it and it is not a popular task with the Royal Navy.” The staff urged its minister to push the sanctions bureaucracy to study ways and means of “getting shot of the commitment.”⁷³

In June 1969 the Defence Overseas Policy Committee agreed to review burden sharing and ending the patrol, but it warned that the “present juncture is not one at which we can afford to give the impression that we are weakening on sanctions.”⁷⁴ Nonetheless, the committee commissioned “in great secrecy” a parallel study to investigate “unobtrusively” the prospects of ending “sanctions altogether or at least reducing their scale and cost.”⁷⁵ These studies were still under way when in September 1969 Wilson made it clear that he was not about to abandon the patrol—the patrol’s future “involves wider issues than those relating merely to defense.”⁷⁶

In the next year the Defence Ministry was still unable to shake the political leadership’s commitment to the patrol. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office forestalled even a proposal to reduce the patrol temporarily from two to one frigate that spring; elections in Britain were about to take place, and the government required that two ships be kept on station. On 16 June 1970, the personal secretary to the defence minister predicted, “Until the election is over, the political

significance of the number of ships engaged in the patrol would make it extremely difficult to agree to any reduction.”⁷⁷

The elections brought in a new government, that of Edward Heath and the Conservatives. Despite rumors in the press, the new cabinet supported the Beira patrol. In July 1970, the new foreign minister, Sir Alec Douglas-Home, confirmed that the United Kingdom would continue it.⁷⁸ Ultimately, however, unalterable external factors—the elimination of the British military commitments east of Suez in 1971 and reduction of the fleet—would force further reduction of the resources committed to the patrol.

Although the Defence Ministry had lost its battle for a policy decision to eliminate the patrol outright, the force itself was whittled down between 1971 and 1975. By the spring of 1975, the patrol was to be a shadow of the carrier, frigate, and Shackleton force of 1966. The reduction occurred in several stages. In March 1971, within a year of its election, the Heath government allowed the Royal Navy to patrol Beira with one frigate instead of two. This relaxation produced a drop from 717 ship-days on patrol during 1970 to 354 ship-days in 1972.⁷⁹

The patrol then lost its air component. In June 1971, the Malagasy Republic asked the Royal Air Force to eliminate the Shackleton detachment at Majunga.⁸⁰ Thereafter, because of an overall drop in the number of frigates in the fleet, the Royal Navy was allowed to make the patrol intermittent; in 1973, the Navy assigned frigates to the station for only 161 ship-days (typically by diverting ships transiting to or from the Far East).⁸¹ “Gapping” the patrol could be justified by the argument that the Umtali refinery was inoperable; not having refined oil since January 1966, the facility could resume doing so only after a lengthy recommissioning process.

The Beira patrol finally wound down completely on 25 June 1975, the day Mozambique became independent, having assured the United Kingdom that it would not transship oil to Rhodesia. On that day HMS *Salisbury* went off station, and the Royal Navy was finally off the hook. Whitehall was likely reassured in this decision when Mozambique gained independence and then sealed its border with Rhodesia in March 1976. Still, the effort had been demanding: seventy-six Royal Navy ships had supported the patrol during its ten-year history. One estimate placed total operating costs at a hundred million pounds.⁸²

The Beira patrol, a useful case study of a unilateral approach to naval sanctions enforcement, offers interesting lessons at several levels. For all of the ship-days and aircraft sorties it required, the patrol appears to have accomplished remarkably little. During its heyday (March 1966–March 1971), the force intercepted a total of forty-seven tankers bound for Beira. Of these, forty-two were allowed to

proceed. The other five did not stop or were escorted from the area.⁸³ Meanwhile, as the government continuously documented, oil got through to Rhodesia from South Africa and the port of Lourenço Marques. The Portuguese announced that between April 1966 and May 1967, 169 tankers entered Lourenço Marques; fifty-eight, the Portuguese reported, had flown the British flag.⁸⁴

Yet the British government was convinced throughout that the patrol was useful as a symbol of the nation's commitment to sanctions against the separatist Rhodesian regime of Ian Smith—a commitment London was obliged to sustain by the legal box in which it had put itself in the UN. Because Security Council Resolution 221, which Britain had drafted, mandated British military action, the government (at least the Foreign and Commonwealth Relations Offices) considered the political costs of discontinuing the patrol greater than the concrete costs of conducting it. Even the Defence Ministry acknowledged that Rhodesia had to expend more foreign exchange moving oil by rail from Lourenço Marques than it would have had the Beira-Umtali pipeline been open.⁸⁵

At the level of practice, the role of the news media proved critically important. At first overconfident about the speed with which sanctions could take effect, the Wilson cabinet was forced to react rapidly in March and April 1966 when world attention focused on two “pirate tankers” steaming toward Mozambique with oil for Rhodesia. Far more oil than such tankers carried was already moving across land borders; nonetheless, the publicity given their approach forced Britain to take action quickly or be accused of weakness.

Had the vessels' arrival in Beira been discovered only after the fact, Whitehall might have been able to draft a less reactive, more thoughtful Security Council resolution. As it proved, Britain learned that while such a resolution can be the ultimate stamp of international legitimacy, it can also be oppressively binding. The United Kingdom felt naturally obliged to use its own navy to deal with its breakaway colony, but the burden could have been made less painful at the onset. For example, British diplomats might have considered calling, in what became paragraph 5 of UNSCR 221, upon all UN member nations, not just the United Kingdom, to contribute military force to enforce the blockade. The blockade, of course, would then not have been under total British control, and ships of the Royal Navy might have found themselves steaming alongside those of its nation's adversaries. Nonetheless, had London realized that sanction enforcement would last so long, it might have welcomed participation by other navies.

Inherently, a multinational force would have further complicated the formulation of rules of engagement, a task that was difficult enough as it was. As vital as rules of engagement are in all such cases to the credibility of sanctions enforcement, it took Britain time (and a Security Council resolution) to create a set

sufficiently robust to allow its ships to stop “pirate tankers.” Even then, it was shown that the blockade could be challenged with impunity, and the rules had to be toughened again (in December 1967). Until that was done, and thereafter to the extent that it could still be evaded, the Beira patrol gave the impression of ineffectiveness.

Still, the most effective sanctions are not necessarily the most visible ones. If Security Council Resolution 221 and the naval blockade it mandated did not really deprive Rhodesia of oil, they were only part of an array of United Nations measures against Rhodesia that ultimately isolated Salisbury and drained the Rhodesian economy. But the process took years, not weeks.

The Beira patrol represented Britain’s hurried response to a highly publicized challenge from its breakaway colony of Southern Rhodesia. The patrol allowed London to limit the escalation of a potentially volatile situation while providing a credible demonstration of its commitment to sanction enforcement, which was the course Whitehall wanted to pursue. The experience ultimately proved, however, that Security Council resolutions—public and formal pronouncements with the authority of the United Nations and the stature of international law—can, when used as weapons, turn in the hands of their wielders. A resolution that had mandated a multinational response would appear to have been less painful for the Royal Navy; it would also have allowed the patrol to be made more effective by generating enough naval force to extend the blockade to other ports. The flexibility offered by a more broadly conceived instrument would have been worth the challenges of preparing and implementing it.

NOTES

1. Gary Clyde Hufbauer, *Economic Sanctions Reconsidered: History and Current Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for International Economics, 1985), p. 411; H. D. Nelson, *Zimbabwe: A Country Study* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Govt. Print. Off. 1983), pp. 42–4. There is an extensive bibliography on the topic of the Rhodesian rebellion and “UDI” (the unilateral declaration of independence). It includes Robert C. Good, *U.D.I.: The International Politics of the Rhodesian Rebellion* (London: Faber and Faber, 1973); Martin Bailey, *Oilgate: The Sanctions Scandal* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1979); Harold Wilson, *A Personal Record: The Labour Government, 1964–1970* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971); Jorge Jardim, *Sanctions Double-Cross: Oil to Rhodesia* (Lisbon: Intervencao, 1978); and William Minter and Elizabeth Schmidt, “When Sanctions Worked: The Case of Rhodesia Reexamined,” *African Affairs*, April 1988.
2. Hufbauer, *Economic Sanctions Reconsidered*, pp. 409–16.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 409.
4. Good, *U.D.I.*, p. 136.
5. Hufbauer, *Economic Sanctions Reconsidered*, p. 409.
6. On 21 December 1965, Wilson had said, “Certainly we have no intention of imposing a naval blockade around Beira, and we never have had. . . . [I]f there is a decision under Chapter VII which suggests a couple of frigates be placed outside Beira to stop oil

- tankers going through, that is what will happen, and happen by international decision.” “What the Prime Minister Said on Oil and the Use of Force,” *London Times*, 11 April 1966.
7. Joint Intelligence Committee, untitled assessment of likely effects of UDI, 1 October 1965, Records of the Cabinet Office [hereafter CAB] 158/60.
 8. Cabinet Office memorandum, 7 January 1966, CAB 164/26.
 9. Good, *U.D.I.*, p. 121.
 10. See “Issues and Instruments,” “Zambia and the Quick Kill,” in Good, *U.D.I.*
 11. Memorandum, Foreign Office to Cabinet Office, 7 January 1966, CAB 164/26.
 12. Good, *U.D.I.*, p. 133.
 13. Memorandum, J. Wright (Cabinet Office) to Commonwealth Relations Office, 16 February 1966, CAB 164/68.
 14. Memorandum, foreign secretary to prime minister, 18 February 1966, CAB 164/26.
 15. Minutes from Chiefs of Staff Committee meeting, 24 February 1966, Records of the Ministry of Defence [hereafter DEFE] 4/196. Middle East Command was under Admiral Sir Michael Le Fanu. Two subordinate commanders would provide forces for the operation: the ships would belong to Flag Officer Middle East, then Rear Admiral P. Howes, while the maritime patrol aircraft belonged to Air Officer Commanding, Air Forces Middle East, who was Air Vice Marshal A. Humphrey.
 16. Good, *U.D.I.*, p. 132.
 17. *Ibid.*, p. 135.
 18. *Ibid.*, p. 136.
 19. Commander in Chief Middle East [hereafter CINCME], “Report on Surveillance of Beira and the Mozambique Channel between 25th January 1966 and 1st May 1967,” 24 October 1967, DEFE 24/517 [hereafter “Report on Surveillance”]; and minutes of Chiefs of Staff Committee meeting, 8 March 1966, DEFE 4/196.
 20. Bailey, *Oilgate*, pp. 151–6.
 21. Minutes, Chiefs of Staff Committee meeting, 8 March 1966, DEFE 4/196.
 22. Commonwealth Relations Office to Wellington, New Zealand, 10 March 1966, CAB 164/26 (enclosing the prime minister’s message to Holyoake).
 23. Message, Commonwealth Relations Office to British High Commissions, 7 April 1966, Records of the Prime Minister’s Office [hereafter PREM] 13/1139.
 24. Memorandum, Minister of Defence to prime minister, 20 April 1966, DEFE 24/517.
 25. CINCME, “Report on Surveillance.”
 26. *Ibid.*; and Ministry of Defence [hereafter MOD] internal memorandum, 16 March 1966, PREM 13/1138 (16a).
 27. Memorandum, “Briefs for New Government, June 1970—Brief no. 27: Beira Patrol,” DEFE 24/588.
 28. The MOD estimated that a force of five Shackletons would give the UK a 90 percent chance of detecting a tanker up to 250 miles from Beira; three Shackletons would have a 70 percent chance of detection. See memorandum from Vice Chief of Defence Staff to cabinet secretary, “Surveillance of the Mozambique Channel,” 18 March 1966, CAB 164/26. In another estimate, CINCME estimated that one twelve-hour sortie a day by a Shackleton would give a 60 percent chance of detecting an eighteen-knot tanker before it was within six hours’ steaming of Beira. See Director of Naval Operations and Trade, “Memorandum to Summarise Planned Arrangements for Beira Patrol,” 12 May 1966, DEFE 24/517.
 29. CINCME, “Report on Surveillance.”
 30. Memorandum, MOD to Cabinet Office, “Publicity for Mozambique Channel Operation,” 4 April 1966, PREM 13/1139.
 31. CINCME, “Report on Surveillance.”
 32. *Ibid.*
 33. Message, Flag Officer, Middle East to HMS *Rhyl* and HMS *Lowestoft*, 15 February 1966, CAB 164/26.
 34. Memorandum, J. O. Wright to MOD, 11 March 1966, CAB 164/26. A message from the Commonwealth Relations Offices to the embassy in Nairobi, Kenya, specified two conditions: flag-state permission and “no serious risk of loss of life.” Commonwealth

- Relations Office message dated 11 March 1966, PREM 13/1138.
35. Bailey, *Oilgate*, pp. 146–50; and Good, *U.D.I.*, p. 136.
 36. Good, *U.D.I.*
 37. Law Officers Department memorandum to prime minister, 7 April 1966, CAB 164/68. Message from Commonwealth Relations Office to British High Commissions, 7 April 1966 PREM, 13/1139.
 38. Good, *U.D.I.*, p. 141.
 39. British UN mission to Foreign Office, 9 April 1966, PREM 13/1140.
 40. *Ibid.*, quoted in its entirety. Hufbauer notes that the UN would introduce even more stringent sanctions in 1968 and 1973. UNSCR 253, approved in May 1968, imposed comprehensive sanctions calling for, among other things, a ban on all exports to Rhodesia (except medical supplies and humanitarian goods). UNSCR 333, passed in 1973, called on member states to punish any of their citizens continuing to deal with clients in South Africa, Mozambique, Angola, Portuguese Guinea, and Namibia “after it had become known that such clients were shipping goods either to or from Rhodesia.”
 41. CINCME, “Report on Surveillance.”
 42. Memorandum, “Passage of a Tanker from Durban to Beira inside Territorial Waters,” Naval Intelligence to prime minister, 14 April 1966, PREM 13/1140.
 43. Foreign Office to British UN mission, undated, CAB 164/616.
 44. Memorandum, defense minister to foreign secretary, “Beira Patrol,” 11 January 1968, DEFE 24/588.
 45. Memorandum, foreign secretary to defense minister, “Rhodesia: Beira Patrol,” 20 February 1968, DEFE 24/588.
 46. See memorandum from defense minister to prime minister, “Surveillance in Mozambique Channel,” 20 April 1966, DEFE 24/517. The MOD also professed confidence in the quality of maritime intelligence support. In April 1966, the defense minister, Denis Healey, noted, “Our experience so far has been that we have had intelligence warning of every suspect tanker entering the Mozambique Channel; the chance is remote of one entering the area in future without our knowledge.”
 47. MOD (Chief of the Defence Staff) to Commander in Chief Far East, “Beira Patrol,” 21 March 1968, DEFE 24/588.
 48. Foreign Ministry to British UN mission, undated, DEFE 24/588.
 49. Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs, “Supply of Oil for South Africa and Mozambique,” memorandum, 2 September 1966, PREM 13/1141.
 50. Memorandum, Director for Naval Operations and Trade to Vice Chief of Naval Staff, “Blockade of South Africa and Mozambique,” 30 November 1966, DEFE 24/517.
 51. “Mandatory Sanctions on Oil Supplies to Rhodesia from Mozambique: Action in the United Nations,” briefing for use of the Minister of Defence in Rhodesia Talks Committee meeting scheduled for 11 October 1966, DEFE 24/517; and Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs, “Supply of Oil for South Africa and Mozambique,” note, 2 September 1966, PREM 13/1141. Portugal refused to stop transshipping oil to Rhodesia, asserting that sanctions enforcement was the responsibility of the international community, particularly those countries whose flags flew on tankers entering Mozambique. Besides, Portugal argued, oil was not really going across its colonial territory to Rhodesia. In frustration, Wilson exploded, “If they are so goddam pure and have nothing to hide, would they agree that we should have a chap down there to watch it?” Note from prime minister’s office to Foreign Office, 12 May 1966, PREM 13/1140.
 52. Letter, MOD to Commonwealth Office, 23 January 1967, DEFE 2/517.
 53. “Mandatory Sanctions on Oil Supplies to Rhodesia from Mozambique.”
 54. MOD memorandum to Commonwealth Office, 15 February 1968, DEFE 24/588.
 55. DOPC briefing paper, 28 March 1968 (115), DEFE 24/588.
 56. “Rhodesia—Oil Supplies through Mozambique,” briefing for Minister of Defence, 27 March 1968, DEFE 24/588.
 57. Letter, FCO to MOD, 10 December 1969, DEFE 24/588.

58. Letter, MOD to FCO, 22 December 1969, DEFE 24/588.
59. "Rhodesia: Beira Patrol: OPD (68) 24," briefing for Secretary of State for Defence to use in DOPC meeting, 27 March 1968, DEFE 24/588. The OPD was the Overseas Policy Committee (i.e., subcommittee) of the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee.
60. "Rhodesia: Beira Patrol," internal MOD memorandum, 27 March 1968, DEFE 24/588.
61. "Rhodesia: Beira Patrol: OPD (68) 24."
62. Letter, FCO to MOD, "Beira Patrol," 10 November 1969, DEFE 24/588.
63. Cabinet Office memorandum, "Far East Run-down: Beira Patrol," 18 September 1969, CAB 164/616. The ten full members of the Western European Union, which had been established on 23 October 1954 to provide mutual defense and to move toward political unification, were and are Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom. Norway has since become an associate member and Sweden an "associate partner."
64. FCO to MOD, 10 November 1969.
65. Memorandum, cabinet secretary to prime minister, 3 March 1970, CAB 165/680.
66. Letter, MOD to Commonwealth Office, "Future of the Beira Patrol," 26 February 1968, DEFE 24/588.
67. Ibid.
68. Briefing for Secretary of State for Defence, 8 March 1968, DEFE 24/588.
69. "Beira Patrol," draft internal memorandum for use by Minister of Defence, May 1969, DEFE 24/588.
70. "Rhodesia: Beira Patrol: OPD (68) 24."
71. Letter, FCO to MOD, "Beira Patrol," 21 November 1968, DEFE 24/588.
72. Draft memo prepared by Secretary of State for Defence, "Beira Patrol," May 1969 (DEFE 24/588).
73. "Beira Patrol—MISC 226 (69) 8 and 12," briefing for defence minister, 2 June 1969, DEFE 24/588. The document steams with frustration: "You may wish to make it clear that the Ministry of Defence does not accept the patrol as a commitment extending indefinitely. . . . If the matter is merely kept under review, the chances are that the issue will be determined on short-term considerations on the next occasion. You are recommended, therefore, to propose that officials should be charged with carrying out a detailed study of ways and means of getting shot of the commitment."
74. Ibid.
75. Memorandum, cabinet secretary to prime minister, 3 March 1970, CAB 165/680.
76. Memorandum, cabinet secretary to Lord Gardiner, 26 September 1969, CAB 164/616.
77. Memorandum, APS/Secretary of State to Secretary [for Defence], Chief of Naval Staff, "The Frigate Shortage and the Beira Patrol," 16 June 1970, DEFE 24/588.
78. Memorandum, R. Armstrong to prime minister, undated (probably 5 August 1970), PREM 15/162.
79. MOD Naval History Staff, *The Royal Navy in Post-War Years*, unpublished monograph, 2001.
80. Elaine Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence* (London: Croom Helm, 1978), pp. 84–6.
81. *Royal Navy in the Post-War Years*.
82. Bailey, *Oilgate*, p. 158. Evidently it was remarkably tedious as well. The *Sunday Times* of 3 September 1978 carried a naval officer's description of the patrol experience as "a fortnight of intense boredom, relieved only by kite-flying competitions, the dropping of mail into the sea from ancient Shackletons, while watching with increasing apathy as the ships passed unmolested."
83. *Royal Navy in the Post-War Years*.
84. Good, *U.D.I.*, p. 208.
85. "Beira Patrol," May 1969.